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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 012265

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [PHUM](#) [KJUS](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: PEACE COMMISSIONER DISCUSSES AUC PEACE PROCESS AND
EXTRADITION WITH AMBASSADOR

REF: A. BOGOTA 12135
[B](#). BOGOTA 12146

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) On November 27, Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo briefed Ambassador on developments in the peace process with the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC):

-- Bananero Bloc: demobilization is complete. Thirty-seven are implicated in major crimes and will stay in the demobilization zone. The rest will report to the reinsertion center in Turbo.

-- Catatumbo Bloc: next to demobilize. The Army has devoted a counterguerrilla battalion from Arauca to secure the area.

-- Cordoba: Protests from cattle ranchers fearful of FARC retaliation forced Restrepo to halt demobilization. He is concerned but working with the military to secure the area.

-- Elmer Cardenas Bloc: the independent paramilitary group powerful in Choco and coastal Antioquia agreed not to invade former Bananero Bloc territory and proposed a peace process with several conditions short of declaration of a cease-fire. The Bloc commander claims the Marines are complicit in drug trafficking by illegal armed groups and independent traffickers in the area. Restrepo believes trafficking is a growing problem along the border with Panama.

-- Others: Small groups in Cundinamarca and southern Magdalena Departments will be completed this year. Three blocs in Valle del Cauca and Cauca Departments are scheduled for early 2005. Restrepo is concerned about drug traffickers taking over the territory.

[1](#)2. (C) Restrepo said the GOC will unilaterally release up to 50 imprisoned FARC guerrillas to prove its commitment to securing the release of FARC hostages. Restrepo advised the GOC to publicize its latest draft of the Law for Justice and Reparations but wait until March to present it formally to Congress. End Summary.

Bananero Bloc Demobilization Completed

[1](#)3. (C) Restrepo expressed satisfaction with the November 25 demobilization of the Bananero Bloc in Turbo, Antioquia Department (ref A). On November 29, the demobilized paramilitaries guilty only of membership in an illegal armed group will depart the demobilization zone and report to the reinsertion center. There are 37, including Bloc Commander Ever Velosa ("Hernan Hernandez"), accused of serious crimes who will remain in the demobilization zone. Restrepo is working with the Prosecutor General's Office ("Fiscalia") to bring investigators to the zone to interview the paramilitaries and process their cases. The police and military increased their presence to secure the areas formerly controlled by the Bananero Bloc. Even in the conflictive area of Nuevo Antioquia, police coverage prevented nearly all residents from fleeing the area in fear of guerrilla retaliation.

Catatumbo Bloc Next

14. (C) President Uribe authorized Restrepo to begin the demobilization of the Catatumbo Bloc in Norte de Santander Department on November 29. It is the largest and most well-armed bloc to demobilize this year. The 1,500 members have at least 900 weapons. The Army will move a counterguerrilla battalion from Arauca Department to the areas formerly dominated by the Catatumbo Bloc, and Restrepo discussed with Counternarcotics Police Commander General Gomez the possibility of increasing aerial eradication. Ideally, Restrepo would like Navy patrols on the Catatumbo River and aerial coverage from the Air Force but neither service has identified resources to do so, although they know security must be improved. The Presidential Council for Social Action is preparing social outreach and civic action projects.

Cordoba Delayed

15. (C) Restrepo tried to begin demobilizing parts of Mancuso's Northern Bloc in Cordoba Department but protests from local cattle ranchers forced him to stop. They view the paramilitaries as necessary to their security and fear the security forces are not prepared to prevent the FARC from entering the area, especially on the coast where drug trafficking flourishes. They threatened to take up arms if necessary. The FARC have a presence in northern (Abibe mountain range), southern (Nudo de Paramillo) and eastern (Puerto Libano) Cordoba. First Division Commander General Montoya, who has been named to lead a pilot inter-service unit for the Caribbean coast, will travel to Cordoba on November 30 to coordinate security. Plans include using at least two helicopters, a counterguerrilla battalion, and a separate battalion on the coast.

Elmer Cardenas Bloc Still Skeptical

16. (C) In mid-November Restrepo met with "Aleman," commander of the independent Elmer Cardenas Bloc (ECB), which operates in Choco and coastal Antioquia Departments, has 1,500) 1,800 members, and is well-financed and organized. Aleman agreed not to invade former Bananero Bloc territory and gave Restrepo an 11-point peace process proposal, which did not include a declaration of a cease-fire. He claims, with some accuracy, that the ECB is in regular contact with the FARC, and therefore could not comply with a full cease-fire. His conditions include a mutual cease-fire in exchange for an increased presence of security forces in nine specific areas, financial support for his troops, and negotiations on regional political issues. Aleman has complained that some members of the Marines cooperate with drug traffickers. Restrepo asserted that the drug trafficking industry on the coast near Panama is growing quickly, and that the security forces do not appear to be well informed about the extent of the problem.

Other Upcoming Demobilizations

17. (C) Restrepo does not expect difficulties with two small demobilizations planned in Cundinamarca and southern Magdalena Departments later this year. Demobilizing the paramilitary groups on the conflictive eastern plains ("Llanos") continues to be problematic. In early 2005, Restrepo plans to demobilize Hernan Hernandez's Calima Bloc, Diego Murillo's ("Don Berna") Pacific Bloc, and Pablo Sevillano's Liberators of the South in Valle del Cauca and Cauca Departments. Restrepo is concerned about the Valle Cartel's ability to take over former paramilitary territory. He estimates there are at least 4,000 hectares of coca in the area. Restrepo said the GOC will unilaterally release up to 50 imprisoned FARC guerrillas to prove its commitment to securing the release of FARC hostages.

Law for Justice and Reparations

18. (C) The GOC revised its April version of the Law for Justice and Reparations to include some aspects of Senator Rafael Pardo's draft (ref B). Restrepo advised President Uribe and the Minister of Interior and Justice to hold public debate on the draft and present it formally to Congress as urgent legislation when Congress re-convenes in March. Restrepo is concerned that there is not enough time left in this year's legislative session to get the bill passed. He noted, however, that it was not his decision. The Ambassador asserted that it was important to get a workable law passed as soon as possible.

WOOD

=====CABLE ENDS=====